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SOME COMPARISONS
BETWEEN
BRITISH AND AMERICAN
TELEVISION
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SOME COMPARISONS BETWEEN BRITISH AND AMERICAN TELEVISION

Excerpts from Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
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By

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INTRODUCTION

British and American television systems in 1953 represented two very different patterns of operation, commercial and non-commercial. British TV was the older system; it had been functioning since 1936, with a long wartime interruption. But viewers were still limited to approximately five and one-half hours of programs daily on the single available British Broadcasting Corporation channel. Great Britain should get a commercial television network, apart from the non-commercial BBC, sometime in 1955.

The two chapters presented here are summary portions of an unpublished thesis titled, British Television, August 12-25, 1953, a Content Analysis of Programs. An article based on material from the thesis appears in the Fall 1954 issue of Journalism Quarterly (Vol. 31, No. 4). Throughout the two chapters, taken without change from the original manuscript, are references to tables and chapters from the complete thesis. Copies of the thesis are available from the author or from the State University of Iowa Central Library and Journalism Reading Room, Iowa City.

Method of Study

The approach used in examining BBC television was that of content analysis; the study was planned to parallel in many of its investigations the surveys of United States TV programs conducted by Professor Dallas W. Smythe for the National Association of Educational Broadcasters. In classifying program content the writer used, for the most part, the same methods employed by Professor Smythe in his 1952 and 1953 monitoring studies of New York City television programs.¹

Seventeen basic categories of programs were adopted, and the categories were subdivided where necessary. A tabulation attached as an appendix to the two chapters shows the British program time and percentage for each analysis category with comparable New York television percentage figures. The reader should note that New York program figures are for the winter, while British figures are for summer programming. Content categories were also divided into three general types or groups according to purpose: entertainment, information, or orientation.

Following Professor Smythe's methods the writer listed programs according to the "time segments" they occupied. These segments were arbitrarily chosen to fit presumptive television audiences. Hours from 7 to 11 p.m. each day were termed "adult hours." Daytime hours from sign-on until 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, were termed "domestic hours," signifying an audience composed largely of housewives. Hours from 5 to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, and from sign-on until 7 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, became "children's hours." Hours after 11 p.m. each day were termed "late hours."

The writer measured violence on television by counting acts and threats in programs of classes other than sports, news, weather, public issues, and public events. Identification of the agents and means of violence were also determined.

1. Dallas W. Smythe, Three Years of New York Television, 1951-1953, January 4-10 and New York Television, January 4-10, 1951, 1952.

Viewer reaction figures were obtained for August 12-25, 1953, showing what programs were most and least liked by members of a viewer panel, and showing what programs were seen most and least by adults. Programs were grouped according to audience preference (not dependent on the number of viewers) and audience size (not dependent on the preference of viewers). An attempt was also made to list specific individual programs liked and disliked by the reviewers of the British press.

Finally, the writer completed a special breakdown of first-run newsreel programs (not repeats) on the BBC television service intended for both children and adults. Sixty-six stories in adult newsreels were covered, as were 14 stories in children's newsreel programs. These were analyzed to see, in the writer's judgment, what countries or geographical areas they were primarily concerned with. Some comparison as to the relative time it took BBC television news to cover a given event was made possible through use of news log breakdowns for August 12-25, 1953, furnished by the Columbia Broadcasting System of the United States for its Doug Edwards program.

Acknowledgments

Several persons devoted much time and effort to helping the writer with his study. Among them are Professor Arthur M. Barnes of the State University of Iowa, Professor Dallas W. Smythe of the University of Illinois, and Robert Silvey, director of Audience research for the British Broadcasting Corporation.

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Chapter IV

SUMMARY OF STUDY OF BRITISH TELEVISION PROGRAMS

General findings for the August 12-25, 1953, BBC television content analysis are here reported under their respective subheadings. Comparisons with New York television programs, where listed, are from Smythe's 1952 and 1953 studies. This chapter introduces five chapters of specific data which follow it. The reader who wishes to explore more thoroughly any of the material in this chapter may refer to the appropriate subject later on. Tables showing information summarized in this chapter are distributed throughout the five chapters.

Table I, p. 60, defines the subject matter categories used by the writer in his content analysis. Other necessary definitions are in the preceding chapter.

Quantity of BBC Television Far Lower Than New York Programs; Most Time in the Adult Hours

A total of 76.8 hours of scheduled air time was clocked for BBC television programs during the two-week analysis period, an average of 38.4 hours per week. Only two New York stations studied by Smythe for one week (January 4-10, 1953) were each on the air for less than twice that time. In one week 651.7 hours of TV programming were observable on New York's seven stations. The BBC's television service was on the air with scheduled programs a little more than one-seventeenth that time per week during the test period.

The greatest proportion of British television program time was in the adult hours. Forty and seven-tenths hours of programs, over half the two-week total, were broadcast during that period. The adult-hour transmission usually started at about 8 o'clock and continued to 10:30 or 11. It was longer on Saturday nights.

The children's hours came in for the next greatest portion of BBC television time. They contained 17.5 hours of programs during the two weeks. The first week accounted for the larger share of children's-hour viewing time partly because a greater amount of sports (cricket) programs were telecast during that week than during the second. Domestic-hour programs took the third greatest amount of time, 16.8 hours for the two weeks. The late hours were least used for BBC telecasts; they contained less than half an hour of scheduled TV programs for the entire observation period.

On New York television during a week in January Smythe's monitors viewed 196.0 hours of adult-hour programs. New York domestic-hour programs took 218.2 hours. Children's-hour programs were third, with 170.4 hours for the single week. Late-hour programs on New York television took 67.2 hours during the January week.

A total of 4.8 more program hours were clocked for the first week of the BBC sample period than for the second. Part of this can be attributed to a 2.7 hour greater amount of spectator sports programs during that week.

Most Programs Entertainment Type; However, Percentage Not as High as for New York

Like New York television programs, TV programs on the BBC were predominantly entertainment. However, the percentage was not as high. Entertainment got 77.7 per cent of New York time, but 64.9 per cent of BBC time was classed in this general category. Entertainment-type program percentages were almost equally distributed over the two weeks of the analysis period, but the first week contained 2.3 hours more of entertainment program time than did the second.

Information-type programs were also concentrated more in the first week of BBC survey time than in the second. There were 2.5 more hours in the first week. Part of this was due to a preponderance of children's information and instruction programs during the initial seven-day period. Information-type programs took 26.2 per cent of the BBC's TV time; Smythe's New York figure is less than this, 16.8 per cent.

Orientation-type programs were about equal in television time for each of the two BBC weeks. They accounted for 8.9 per cent of the program minutes during the entire study period. The figure for New York stations was 5.5 per cent.

Drama Programs Took Quarter of Scheduled Time

Drama programs took more time than those in any other class during the BBC viewing period, 24.5 per cent of all TV time. There were over two hours more of drama in the second week than in the first. The total percentage was considerably less than the New York TV figure, 47 per cent of all time. Drama aimed at the general audience took 16.8 per cent of total British program time; the January 1953 New York figure was 43 per cent. BBC television showed a larger percentage of children's drama programs than was reported on New York TV, 7.7 per cent of total program time compared to 3.9 per cent.

Comedy drama stood first in time as a sub-class of all BBC drama programs, receiving (for both children and adults) 5.4 per cent of all time. The New York figure for comedy drama was 6.0 per cent (also for both children and adults). The second sub-class on the BBC was domestic drama, with 4.6 per cent of program time; this category occupied 6.0 per cent of the New York time. Crime drama, the leading New York drama sub-class with 15.3 per cent, rated 4.2 per cent of BBC program time.

Spectator sports won a two-week total of 18.5 per cent of BBC television viewing time. (Outside broadcasts of sporting events took 13.6 per cent of the time of BBC television during the year ending March 31, 1953.) As was previously noted, this extra-large total was partly due to the telecasting of a cricket Test match. Two and seven-tenths more hours of spectator sports were shown during the first week than during the second week. The New York figure for spectator sports was 5.3 per cent of total time.

Variety programs were about as popular, percentage-wise, on August BBC television as on January New York TV. The BBC figure was 12.4 per cent; that for New York, 11.8 per cent. Domestic variety which occupied 4.9 per cent of total New York time was entirely absent from the BBC; general variety programs for adults took 11.1 per cent of the BBC time. Programs classified as quiz, stunts, and contests took 5.3 per cent of New York time, 2.2 per cent of time on the BBC.

News Dominated Information-Type Programs

News of all types (including sports news and interviews) got the most time of BBC information-type programs, a somewhat larger share than news received in New York. The BBC figure was 13.1 per cent of all scheduled program time; that for New York, 7.9 per cent. This was partly caused by the BBC practice of repeating newsreel programs. The five Monday-through-Friday newsreels and the weekly children's newsreel were all repeated at least once; many were repeated twice. A composite program each Saturday evening featured the week's adult newsreels.

General information-type programs occupied 6.4 per cent of all BBC scheduled time; the New York figure was 2.4 per cent. Listed under this category were science, travelogue, and miscellaneous documentary material. Domestic information, which occupied 5.4 per cent of all New York program time, took 3.5 per cent of the time on the BBC. During the observation period there were no BBC television programs on cooking or personal care. Cooking programs took 2.8 per cent of all New York time; programs on personal care took 0.8 per cent.

Public Events Led BBC Orientation-Type Listings

Public events led BBC orientation-type program listings with a total of 4.2 per cent of the time of the entire August 12-25 viewing period. In the week of January 4-10, 1953, there were no public events programs on New York television. An hour and a quarter of the BBC public events programs were telerecordings of previous public events. Public issues on the BBC received 1.7 per cent; the New York percentage was 1.5. Religion was the largest class of orientation-type programming for New York, with 1.7 per cent, but it got only 0.3 per cent of time on the BBC. (The Corporation's figure for television time devoted to religion in the year ending March 31, 1953, was 1.0 per cent.) Pre-school entertainment took 2 per cent of the total BBC scheduled time, only 0.5 per cent of the time on New York television.

Drama Was Biggest Category in the Adult Hours

After examining the various kinds of programs distributed throughout the content analysis viewing period (See above and Chapter V), the writer studied what program types fell into each of the four time segments of the day. This information is presented in Chapters VI and VII; it is summarized below.

Drama took a greater portion of adult-hour viewing time than did programs in any other class. The BBC August figure was 28.0 per cent; this was considerably smaller than the figure of 50.3 per cent of all adult-hour viewing time assigned to drama on January New York television. The second biggest adult-hour program category on the BBC was variety, with 22.0 per cent, compared to 7.4 per cent of New York television adult-hour viewing time. The BBC had more adult-hour drama programs during the second week than during the first, more variety programs during the first week than the second.

News (including sports news and interviews) was the third largest adult-hour program category on the BBC, claiming a two-week average of 13.7 per cent; the New York figure was 6.4 per cent. General information had 6.5 per cent of time on the BBC, 2.2 per cent on New York television. Public events programs, all during the second week of the analysis period, contributed 4.1 per cent of the BBC adult-hour total.

Spectator Sports Was Biggest Domestic-Hour Category

Spectator sports (the cricket Test match) got the greatest amount of time during BBC television domestic hours. The two-week average was 36.7 per cent; sports news had 4.3 per cent of the domestic-hour time. The January 4-10, 1953, New York domestic-hour sports average was 0.2 per cent. Drama had 32.8 per cent of the New York domestic-hour program time, but the BBC figure was 7.5 per cent, representing a single feature-length American movie shown during the second week. Eleven and six-tenths per cent of the BBC domestic-hour scheduled program time was devoted to repeats of newsreel programs. News occupied 7.5 per cent of domestic-hour New York time. Domestic information claimed 13.5 per cent of domestic-hour time on the BBC, 12.7 per cent of this time on New York TV. Pre-school entertainment counted for 9.1 per cent of BBC domestic-hour time; the New York figure was 1.1 per cent.

Children's Drama Biggest Children's-Hour Class

Drama, almost entirely children's drama, was the largest content category during the children's hours on BBC television, amounting to 33.2 per cent; drama claimed 57.3 per cent of New York children's-hour TV program time, but Smythe's 1953 survey states that most of this was drama intended for a general audience, not specifically for children. Spectator sports (partly the Test match) took 30.0 per cent of BBC children's hour time; most of this was during the first week. The New York sports figure was 1.5 per cent. Sports news took 5.3 per cent of BBC children's hours; the New York percentage was 2.1.

Children's information and instruction programs had the third highest percentage of time during BBC children's hours, a total of 10.6 per cent. The January 4-10 New York figure was 2.0 per cent. Public events programs took a total of 8.4 per cent of children's hour time on the BBC, no time at all on New York television. On the other hand programs classed under religion had 4 per cent of New York children's hour time, no time on the BBC during children's hours.

Weather programs (regularly shown at the end of each evening's television throughout the viewing period) claimed more of the small late-hour BBC time than did programs in any other category. New York late-hour viewing (a much longer time) was dominated by drama programs.

Over Half of BBC Entertainment Programs in Adult Hours

Entertainment time for BBC television, August 12-25, 1953, was centered mainly in the adult hours; the same was true of New York television, though the percentage was not as large (32.9 compared with 58.2 per cent). Due to the fact that evening programs took most of the BBC's television transmission time, the adult hours also had the largest shares of information and orientation-type programs. The center of gravity for information-type programs on New York television was the domestic hours; the greatest amount of New York orientation-type program time was in the children's hours.

A larger percentage of BBC children's programs was in the children's hours than was true of New York television (74.0 per cent compared to 59.4 per cent). Domestic programs were more-or-less concentrated in the domestic hours on both British and New York television. General audience programs were mainly in the BBC's adult hours, although a large amount of sports programming was found in domestic and

children's time segments. A larger percentage of sports programs was in the domestic hours than in any other time division.

There was no variety programming in the BBC's domestic hours, though nearly half of New York television variety program time was in these hours. Over 95 per cent of BBC variety program time was in the adult hours. BBC adult hours also accounted for 61.8 per cent of drama time; the New York figure was 32.2 per cent. These hours contained 87.5 per cent of the BBC's music programming. Music program time was concentrated more in the domestic hours on New York television.

More Violence on New York TV Than BBC

Data concerning acts and threats of violence are presented in detail in Chapter VIII.

It is difficult to judge the significance of an act or threat of violence, how harmful (if at all) it would be to a given member of a given audience. The writer has only attempted to count the acts and threats in certain program classes. He counted 89 acts and 67 threats during the two weeks of BBC television programs. The average number per hour was 3.3; the New York January average as determined by Smythe was about twice as large, 6.2. The New York figure was based on a count of 3,421 acts and threats of violence over many more program hours than were on the BBC.

Nearly 85 per cent of all acts and threats of violence on BBC television were in entertainment-type programs; the average was 3.8 per hour. The New York per-hour figure for entertainment-type programs was 7.1 acts and threats. Drama averaged 6.0 acts and threats per hour on BBC television, 9.7 acts and threats for New York. Drama for children contained more acts and threats of violence per hour than any other program class on both BBC and New York television, 10.1 for the BBC and 22.4 for New York television. A single episode of western drama (part of an old American Wild West serial) lasting 16.5 minutes was the British program most saturated with violence. In it there were 12 acts and threats. BBC comedy drama contained 31 acts and threats of violence; the total for crime drama was 29. New York crime drama was slightly more saturated with violence than was crime drama on the BBC; however, the BBC's comedy drama was the more saturated with violence.

Human Agents Caused Most Violence

Human agents caused three-quarters of the acts and threats of violence during the August 12-25 BBC viewing period; the January New York figure was 88 per cent. The whip, the club, and the gun were the most popular weapons used on the BBC; "weaponless" use of the hand or foot was also popular. There were no acts of violence (though there were threats) on the BBC involving military action, use of a rope, legal process, or force of nature. Accidents accounted for most of the BBC violence caused by non-human agents; and falls were the most common accidents. Acts of animals were responsible for a much larger percentage of violence on the BBC than on New York television. There were more verbal threats than threats caused by any other single means on both BBC and New York television programs.

Both the Viewers and the Critics Liked Cricket; Drama, Variety Rated High

Chapter IX contains a detailed breakdown of viewer reactions to BBC television programs during August 12-25, 1953.

Findings from analysis of the preferences of critics during the two-week BBC viewing period were inconclusive, mainly because not enough critics commented specifically on most of the programs to enable their judgements to be tabulated. The cricket Test match telecasts were given top ratings by the most critics and were most liked by the BBC's own panel of viewers. The cricket telecasts were not among the programs most widely seen by the BBC viewing audience; they were presented during the afternoon hours when the audience was smaller than during the evenings.

Two half-hour episodes of an adult evening science fiction thriller rated high with the critics and were among the programs most seen by the viewing public. (They were among the programs most saturated with violence, also.) A play classified as crime drama (also one of the more violent programs) was also among the programs most liked by the critics and most seen by the public.

The 21 programs on BBC television most seen by adult viewers contained nearly three times as much violence per hour as the 22 least seen programs. But even this figure, 3.2 acts and threats per hour, was slightly below the over-all BBC average. The 20 programs liked best by the BBC panel of viewers had the same average as all BBC television programs together, 3.3 acts and threats per hour; the 21 programs liked least had a very slightly higher saturation with violence.

Drama and variety programs rated high among those most seen by the adult British audience. Many programs in these categories were among those most liked by members of the BBC panel; many in the same two categories were among the programs least liked by the panel; but no programs in drama or variety categories were among those seen least.

The Most Viewers Watched Saturday Nights; Sunday Nights
Were Second

Programs Saturday nights during the BBC viewing period captured the largest adult audiences; second most popular were Sunday evening programs. All of the 22 programs least seen by adults were televised during the daylight hours. Most of them were shown during domestic-hour viewing time. All six programs classified as pre-school entertainment during the two weeks were among those least seen by adult viewers. General and domestic information programs and repeats of newsreels were also frequently among the least seen.

Six of the 21 BBC programs most seen by adult viewers were on Saturday nights; the top three most-seen programs were Saturday nights. The top ten most-liked programs by the BBC viewer panel were all portions of the cricket Test match, which lasted four days. Viewers liked the Test match telecasts better and better as the event continued from day to day (and apparently as England's hopes of winning improved). Three other programs connected with the Test match also were among those most liked by the panel.

During the study period the BBC produced a major play each Sunday evening, then ~~repeated it~~ on Thursday. Sunday audiences for the plays were somewhat larger than

the Thursday audiences; but only repeat versions of two of the plays placed among those programs liked most by the viewer panel.

Two of the four programs liked least by the viewer panel composed the entire category of programs devoted to the dance on BBC TV. The only two programs devoted to serious music ranked in the least-liked 19.

American TV News Faster Than BBC, When Not on Motion Picture Film

Chapter X contains detailed results of a special study of BBC television news-reel programs shown during August 12-25, 1953.

A rough comparison of BBC television newsreel programs during August 12-25, 1953, with stories telecast on the CBS "Doug Edwards Show" during the same time period indicates that coverage of world events without movie film was faster on the American program. The format of the BBC television newsreel was so designed that the entire program had to be on movie film. The announcer was never seen. Taking geographical factors into consideration, movie film coverage speed of both news programs was about on par.

BBC Television News Paid Most Attention to British Isles;

Stories Made No Unfavorable Mentions of the United States

The analysis of items on BBC television's newsreels showed no direct or indirect unfavorable references to the United States during the two-week period. The United States was of primary importance in two stories; of secondary importance in three; and of passing interest in seven stories--all out of a total of 80 unrepeated news stories. The British Isles were of primary importance in 46 stories; of secondary importance in 11; and of passing interest in three stories. Other foreign lands outside the British Isles and the United States (including members of the British Commonwealth) were of primary importance in 33 stories; of secondary importance in seven; and of passing interest in 12 stories.

There was no one available in the United States to evaluate news stories on the "Doug Edwards Show," during August 12-25, in terms of the importance of geographical areas.

Chapter XI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

American viewers and broadcasters have not had much opportunity to find out that television was operating in Britain in 1936, years before the United States had it. This is because little has been published to challenge the notion that TV is exclusively an American invention. In this thesis the writer has attempted to present a fairly complete description of British television as he saw it. He has done so with three purposes in mind.

Purposes of Study

1. To acquaint the reader with the history and status of British television and to outline the problems that this TV system had to face at the close of 1953. Particular attention was paid to the financial problems of the BBC. British television operations had to be conducted on a limited budget. The situation resembled, possibly, that of non-commercial television producers in the United States.

2. To analyze a two-week period of programs on BBC television and to see how much, or how little, these programs resembled United States TV programs. Special attention was paid to BBC Viewer Research data to show the likes and dislikes of viewers in Britain and to exhibit the methods used by the BBC in compiling its audience research reports.

3. To see if the content analysis methods used by Professor Dallas W. Smythe to study New York television could be adapted for the study of English language television systems outside the United States. If these methods can be used, they are practicable tools for making future international television comparisons.

Limiting Factors

The writer was limited by two factors, but he feels they did not prevent him from fulfilling for the most part all of his purposes. They were:

1. He could not select a more representative period to view BBC television than August 12-25, 1953. Financial limitations kept the writer from studying BBC television for the entire year. Financial limitations also compelled him to select a period in August, when he could be in London.¹ Each study of New York television by Smythe (for 1951, 1952, and 1953) is an analysis of a single week's programs in January.

¹ In his book Content Analysis in Communication Research, Bernard Berelson states (p. 175): "Sampling in content analysis, as elsewhere, is complicated by the difficulty or even the impossibility of physically securing necessary sample units. Many samples have been determined primarily by the availability of material, even though such material was not the most suitable for the purposes at hand." He adds (p. 177): "The problem of securing representativeness in a sample of issues (or dates) is conditioned by certain factors. For example, the relevant content may be subject to seasonal variations . . ."

2. Only the writer was available to make the viewing study and tabulate the data. He could not check his classifications of BBC television programs with other monitors. This limitation was explained in Chapter III.

British Television, Past and Present

By the end of 1953 television in Britain had reached a crossroad. There were two--possibly three--alternative roads to follow, but there had to be a choice. One road meant continuing the then current low annual license charge for operating receiving sets (\$5.60 for sound radio and television combined) and keeping programs much as they were, for a little over five hours a day on one channel; there could be some future expansion, but it would have to be slow because of limited finances. The second choice, a variation of the first one, also meant sticking with the BBC. Great Britain could have an expanded non-commercial television service within the next few years, but the yearly license fee would have to be higher (perhaps \$8.40 or \$11.20 per set). The alternative to these choices meant at least a partial element of commercial competition in television, although the BBC's TV service might be retained also. The Conservative Government chose this last alternative, against the wishes of the Labor Party and against the wishes of some of its own Party members. How soon the Conservative Government could implement its television plans depended on decisions by Parliament (pending in the spring of 1954) and on the nation's ability to pay for television expansion. Chapters I and II bring the television situation up to the end of 1953.

Content Analysis Summary

The following points are summarized from the content analysis portion of this thesis (Chapters IV-VII):

1. Programs took more time on each of the seven New York stations for an observation week in 1953 than on BBC television. The average New York station was on the air over twice as long as the BBC, if content analysis periods are representative of the entire year.
2. New York television had smaller percentages of many kinds of programs than did the BBC, but this does not tell the whole story. The actual times taken by New York programs were often greater because the total program time of all New York stations was much the greater. Though there was some duplication from station to station, the New York viewer could see more hours of programs in almost every category than could the British viewer.
3. Just the same, a slightly smaller proportion of BBC programs were entertainment-type than were New York programs. Slightly larger percentages of BBC programs were information-type and orientation-type.
4. Scheduled BBC television transmission periods were usually from 3 to 4, 5 to 6, and 8 to 10:30 p.m. (The first afternoon transmission period was left out on Sundays,) but they were frequently varied to suit day-to-day circumstances and to allow for special events (like the cricket Test match). Schedules for each day were printed in the newspapers and in Radio Times, a weekly magazine published by the BBC.
5. BBC television programs were not required to fit into rigid time limits as were New York programs. There were no interruptions in programs for station

identification. Telecasts did not have to fit arbitrarily into quarter-hour, half-hour, or hour-long time segments; there was some effort to make them fit roughly into these general limits.

6. There were no commercials or "public service announcements" on BBC television. Announcements between programs varied considerably in length. Such announcements always concerned the television programs themselves.

7. BBC-TV transmissions were almost always over by 11 p.m. (when the "late hours" started). Some of the New York stations stayed on much later.

8. All British television transmitters carried the same regular program at the same time during the August 12-25 viewing period. There was no alternative channel. (Schedules in Radio Times indicate that during other weeks, from time to time, one or two of the transmitters presented a few regional programs of their own.)

9. The BBC frequently televised public events, national ceremonies, parades, reviews, etc. This gave occasion for a remark: "It's easy to find the Queen these days; just follow the 'outside broadcast' television cameras."

10. Because most of the BBC's total television time was logged in the adult (evening) hours, the largest percentages of entertainment, information, and orientation-type programs were during these hours.

11. There was a larger percentage of news reports programs on the BBC than on New York television, but BBC-TV newsreels were repeated as many as two times without change. (See also summary item 2.)

12. Sports occupied a large share of BBC television time during August 12-25, 1953, partly because of a cricket Test match. The Corporation's figures show that outside broadcasts of sports events took 13.6 per cent of total program time during the year ending June 30, 1953. Sports broadcasts took 21.0 per cent of all program time during the two weeks in August. (See also item 2.)

13. The BBC had special daily hour-long transmissions for children and special regular programs "for the very young" and for deaf children. New York stations were less likely to schedule programs for children as a special group of viewers, and for special groups of children.

14. Programs on the BBC intended for children were pretty well confined to the children's hours (usually about 5 to 6 p.m.). Children's programs were more scattered on New York television stations.

15. Children's hours on both New York and British television had high percentages of drama programs; but most drama during New York children's hours was intended for a general or adult audience. Almost all the BBC drama during children's hours was intended for children.

16. "Leisure and Pleasure" and "About the Home" were the titles of series of programs for women frequently found during the BBC afternoon domestic hours (usually 3 to 3:45 or 4 p.m.). There was a somewhat larger percentage of information content, smaller percentage of entertainment content, on BBC-TV domestic-hour programs than on New York programs shown during the domestic hours.

17. Drama was a popular kind of entertainment on both television systems. New York TV had a considerably larger share of its evening (adult) hours devoted to drama than did the BBC.

18. Variety programs were present in about equal proportions on both television systems. Large shares of the New York variety programs were intended for children or housewives during the daytime hours. Most of the BBC variety programs were of a different sort. With a few exceptions they were presentations of "music hall" vaudeville acts during the evening hours for adult viewers.

Summary of Data on Violence

These points summarize the study of violence on British television (Chapter VIII):

1. New York television when studied by Smythe had nearly twice as many acts and threats of violence per hour as did the BBC when studied by the writer.
2. Entertainment-type programs had the most acts and threats of violence per hour on both television systems.
3. Drama was the most violent entertainment-type category on both systems.
4. Children's drama was the most violent kind of drama on both television systems, but New York children's TV drama had more than twice as many acts and threats of violence as did BBC children's drama. This difference was most evident in comedy drama for children.
5. Twelve of the BBC acts and threats of violence, nearly a quarter of those in all British children's drama programs, happened during one episode of an American Western serial film.
6. Programs shown during the children's hours were more violent than programs shown in all other time segments on both TV systems. New York children's-hour programs were more violent than children's-hour programs on the BBC.
7. Human agents caused far more violence than non-human agents on both television systems, though accidents and acts of animals were responsible for greater percentages of the violence on BBC television than on New York TV programs.
8. As a weapon the gun was less than half as popular in BBC programs as it was in New York television. The club or stick and the whip (on animals) were used more often than the gun for committing BBC acts and threats of violence.

Summary of Audience Reactions

The study of viewer preferences in Britain (Chapter IX) produced the following information:

1. The BBC Audience Research Department used "reaction index" figures to show program preferences. These had nothing to do with audience size. They were qualitative.

2. The Department used "box office" figures to show the actual viewing audience sizes. These had little to do with reactions to programs. The largest audience was always in the evenings. There was no alternative channel for dissatisfied viewers to turn to.

3. All 21 of the most seen programs during the observation period were in the evenings. Almost all of these were entertainment type.

4. All $\frac{3}{4}$ of the least seen programs were in the afternoons. Over half of the time of these programs was information type, and nearly a quarter was orientation type.

5. Critics and viewers of the BBC all liked cricket; the popularity of the Test match increased as time went on, and as England started to win over Australia.

6. All but one of the 20 most liked programs were entertainment type; the leading ten of the top 20 were telecasts of the cricket Test match.

7. Programs with the lowest reaction indices (least liked programs) were also predominantly entertainment type.

8. Next to sports, drama accounted for the largest share of the most liked programs. The drama category took the greatest time of those programs most seen by British viewers, but variety was close behind.

9. Drama was also the most frequently disliked type of BBC program. Seven of the 21 least liked programs were drama. Many viewers disliked "highbrow" music and the ballet.

10. Programs seen least by BBC viewers had fewer acts and threats of violence per hour than other programs. This may have been because over half of these programs were information type.

11. Data from the columns of critics writing about BBC television during August 12-25, 1953, were generally inconclusive. Not enough critics rated each program. Many opinions were indefinite.

Summary About News Programs

Points 2 and 11 of the content analysis summary in this chapter should be applied to the detailed study of news programs in Chapter X. The information below concerns BBC adult and children's newsreels and the American CBS "Doug Edwards Show," all for August 12-25, 1953. (The idea was to compare the BBC television newsreel with a typical American network TV news program.)

1. There were no commentators employed to express their own opinions on BBC-TV news programs.

2. BBC television newsreels were entirely on motion picture film; the "Doug Edwards Show" used stills and man-on-camera to supplement and bring up to date its motion picture coverage.

3. Because it operated under more competitive circumstances, the American program was faster with the news than the BBC. Both programs had to wait days for motion pictures from remote areas, but American film coverage seemed a little the faster.

4. Both news programs were fastest at filming--and showing--news events at their doorsteps.

5. Both programs (especially the BBC's) stressed events local to the home country.

6. The "Doug Edwards Show" had almost twice as many stories as the BBC-TV newsreel. But BBC stories were longer; the BBC covered more events on movie film. BBC film stories were generally the longer.

7. There were more feature stories on film on the British than the U.S. program. The pace of the British television newsreel seemed more leisurely.

8. A report of the news, sound only, was transmitted nightly over the audio portion of BBC television. This lacked the essential element of vision though it was as up to date as radio news.

9. BBC-TV newsreels made no unfavorable references to the United States, but the U.S. was "a locale of primary importance" in only two stories out of ten newsreels.

Conclusions

The points enumerated above summarize those findings in this study of British television that the writer believes are most important. He also believes the results themselves demonstrate the practicality of applying the Smythe content analysis methods to a study of any English-language television system. He experienced no unusual difficulties in categorizing most of the programs shown on British television during his viewing period, although he changed some of his classifications after talking with Professor Smythe.

One important point of difference between American and British television influenced program content probably profoundly. That was in the nature of the television systems themselves. Neither system seemed to have all the arguments in its favor.

Non-commercial British television assumed a policy of planning programs for the good or the benefit of its viewers. Commercial American television assumed that people would watch only what was good and that the most-watched show was in some way the best show. These are oversimplifications, but they illustrate the difference.

Another point of difference that affected the two television systems was in the preferences of the viewers themselves. Television broadcasts of the cricket Test match were praised by British viewers. American viewers would have undoubtedly preferred baseball to cricket.

This difference should not be overemphasized. British versions of American quiz programs were popular on British television, as were American Western films.

Since British television was not commercial, it was not as greatly concerned as American TV with attracting an audience away from competing means of entertainment. The emphasis was not entirely on "box office" or audience size figures. British viewer reactions were measured by a method that took no account of audience size. These "qualitative" reaction figures were used along side quantitative audience measurements. Neither kind of data was supreme, and both kinds of data had to be weighed with BBC judgments of what it thought viewers should have.

BBC audience ratings were not publicized as such figures are in America. Data upon which Chapter IX of this study was for the most part based were intended for confidential use within the Corporation.

BBC television time could not be bought or sold. There were apparently no rules confining programs to rigid time segments measured (and paid for) to the second. There were no announcements on BBC television other than those pertinent to the programs themselves.

British television apparently did not have all the tried and true methods of attracting viewers that U.S. television has been accused of using. There was less violence per hour on British than American television, though both television systems seemed to cater to an apparent liking of children for violence. Percentages of time (though not actual amounts of time) of programs devoted to ballet, art, and classical music were higher on the BBC than New York television, but research figures indicated programs of these types were not among the most popular.

British critics of American television have suggested that the tastes of British viewers are somewhat more elevated than the tastes of Americans who watch television. The writer believes he has found evidence that this is not so. Indeed, those programs most popular among British viewers were variety, drama, and sports offerings, the types of programs most popular in the United States.

The BBC could, and did devote a greater proportion of its time than New York television to special programs for groups of viewers, often groups who were minorities of the potential viewing audience. This was especially noticeable with regard to programs for children. "Children's Television" was always at 5 o'clock, Monday through Sunday. Also, newsreels, plays, and special events programs were often repeated for the groups of viewers, usually smaller groups, who did not see them during their first showings.

Because the BBC did not sell its programs to advertisers who needed audiences for their commercial messages, the BBC could experiment with programs that might have had very limited appeal. Information-type programs at times seemed directed to relatively small groups of interested people.

The goal of each BBC television program was within the content of that program itself, not in getting results to a set of accompanying advertisements.

The successful BBC television playwright received less money for his efforts than his American counterpart (that is a matter of record), but he apparently enjoyed greater freedom in dealing with his subject matter. Taboos against things that might offend some viewers were less apparent on the BBC than in American television drama. Thus, with warnings from the announcer that the children be sent to bed, the BBC in 1953 presented a grotesque, but thrilling, science fiction serial ("The Quatermass Experiment") that resembled somewhat the Orson Welles broadcast of the 1930's which caused havoc among U.S. radio listeners. (There was apparently little unfavorable reaction to the BBC program.)

But aside from all of these things, the New York viewer, by judicious twisting of his television set dial among seven stations, could find in 1953 more program material of practically every kind than the British viewer could find on the BBC. In addition, television was available in New York at almost any time of the day. In London it was available a little over five hours daily.

Individual American stations frequently originated their own television programs to suit local audiences. This was not true in Britain. BBC regional television programs were a rarity. Most of the telecasts originated from London studios and were carried by all British video transmitters.

United States television was considerably better financed than the BBC. Better salaries were the rule. More expensive talent could be hired, and better sets and studio facilities were available. New York and Hollywood added a professional polish especially to variety programs, that was lacking on British television. This difference in technique was not generally as evident in drama or information-type programs.

Tradition played an apparent part in British television. The BBC's traditional, and enforced, rule of strict neutrality toward all controversial matters was observed. A rather evasive traditional way of doing things seemed to set a pattern for BBC television. This pattern was in no way like that set by the advertisers who sponsored American TV programs.

Another tradition was "the British way of life," sort of a feeling of patriotism that caused public ceremonies and pageantry to rank among the most popular program offerings.

Partly because of this feeling of tradition, partly because of the lack of competition, the whole British television operation--as well as its newsreel programs--seemed to proceed at a more leisurely pace than did New York television. (Conclusions regarding the newsreels were reached in Chapter IX.) The British television executive seemed calmer than his American opposite number; his job seemed more secure.

Opportunities for Future Study

Commercial television for Britain was approved by Parliament in votes taken during late 1953 and early 1954, although no starting date had been set by the spring of 1954. The question arises: "How will the presence of commercials affect future British television program content?" Chapter II of this thesis contains a number of predictions by opponents and supporters of a commercial service; but what will actually happen must be the subject of a future study titled, perhaps, "British Television Program Content Before and After Commercialization." It would also be desirable to compare British television through an annual survey of programs like Smythe's yearly New York study.

The findings of this thesis indicate many factors that should be examined in a future study. The thesis itself illustrates some difficulties that the person who attempts an analysis of British television should be prepared for. To get the best possible results the future analyst should conduct a thorough pre-survey, select the most representative possible viewing period, and make use of trained monitors to check each other's program classifications.

Appendix

British Broadcasting Corporation Television, August 12-25, 1953
 Total Program Time, with January 4-10, 1953, New York City
 Program Percentages for Comparison*

Program Class	First Min.	Week Pct.	Second Min.	Week Pct.	Total Min.	Total Pct.	New York Pct.
<u>Entertainment-type programs:</u>							
8 Drama (General)	320.75	13.3	459.00	21.7	779.75	17.2	43.1
8a Domestic	94.50	3.9	114.75	5.4	209.25	4.6	5.8
8a-1 Serial	-	-	20.75	1.0	20.75	0.5	2.7
8a-2 Other	94.50	3.9	94.00	4.4	188.50	4.2	3.1
8b Crime	-	-	120.00	5.7	120.00	2.7	15.2
8c Western	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.9
8d Action	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.6
8e Comedy	65.50	2.7	103.75	4.9	169.25	3.7	5.1
8f Romance-His- torical	125.25	5.2	-	-	125.25	2.8	5.1
8g Musical	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.4
8h Classics	-	-	81.50	3.8	81.50	1.8	0.9
8i Other	35.50	1.5	39.00	1.8	74.50	1.6	0.1
17c Drama(Children)	167.75	7.0	158.75	7.5	326.50	7.2	3.9
17c-1 Crime	69.00	2.9	-	-	69.00	1.5	0.1
17c-2 Western	-	-	16.50	0.8	16.50	0.4	1.4
17c-3 Comedy	45.00	1.9	31.75	1.5	76.75	1.7	0.9
17c-4 Adven.-Hist.	45.00	1.9	48.00	2.3	93.00	2.1	0.7
17c-5 Children's Action	-	-	30.00	1.4	30.00	0.7	0.8
17c-6 Fairy Tales	-	-	32.50	1.5	32.50	0.7	0.1
17c-7 Classics	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
17c-8 Other	8.75	0.4	-	-	8.75	0.2	-
12 Variety(General)	302.25	12.6	199.25	9.4	501.50	11.1	3.5
16f Domestic Variety	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.9
17d Teen-Age Variety	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.3
17e Other Variety (Child.)	-	-	60.50	2.9	60.50	1.3	3.1
9 Dance	28.50	1.2	15.00	0.7	43.50	1.0	0.1
10 Music(General)	52.00	2.2	88.75	4.2	140.75	3.1	2.2
10a Serious	18.00	0.7	60.00	2.8	78.00	1.7	0.2
10b Light	34.00	1.4	11.00	0.5	45.00	1.0	-
10c Popular	-	-	17.75	0.8	17.75	0.4	2.0

Appendix (Cont'd)

British Broadcasting Corporation Television, August 12-25, 1953

Total Program Time, with January 4-10, 1953, New York City

Program Percentages for Comparison*

Program Class	First Min.	Week Pct.	Second Min.	Week Pct.	Total Min.	Total Pct.	New York Pct.
16g Housewives' Music	6.25	0.3	5.00	0.2	11.25	0.2	2.2
13 Personalities	55.00	2.3	8.00	0.4	63.00	1.4	2.7
14 Quiz-Stunt- Contest	66.75	2.8	31.50	1.5	98.25	2.2	5.3
14a Experts, Guests	66.75	2.8	31.50	1.5	98.25	2.2	3.6
14b Studio Audience	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.1
14c Telephone	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.5
14d Amateur	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1
17f Child. Quiz etc.	-	-	9.75	0.5	9.75	0.2	0.3
15b Spectator Sports	500.75	20.8	336.25	15.9	837.00	18.5	5.3
15c Particip. & Rec.	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.2
11 Fine Arts	20.50	0.9	27.25	1.3	47.75	1.1	0.3
11a Literature	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11b Other	20.50	0.9	27.25	1.3	47.75	1.1	-
17g Other Children's	15.50	0.6	-	-	15.50	0.3	-
<hr/>							
<u>Total Entertainment-</u> <u>type programs</u>	1536.00	63.9	1399.00	66.0	2935.00	64.91	77.7
<hr/>							
<u>Information-type programs</u>							
1 News (General)	258.50	10.8	218.75	10.3	477.25	10.6	6.6
1a News Reports	204.50	8.5	199.25	9.4	403.75	8.9	4.3
1b Spec. Evnts. & Feat.	32.75	1.4	-	-	32.75	0.7	2.3
1c News for Children	21.25	0.9	19.50	0.9	40.75	0.9	- **
15a Sprts Nws, Intrvus	53.50	2.3	60.00	2.8	113.50	2.5	1.3
2 Weather	18.50	0.8	19.00	0.9	37.50	0.8	0.5
6 Information(Gen.)	172.00	7.2	118.50	5.6	290.50	6.4	2.4
6a Science	32.75	1.4	30.75	1.5	63.50	1.4	0.2
6b Travelogue	41.25	1.7	6.75	0.3	48.00	1.1	0.7
6c Other	98.00	4.1	81.00	3.8	179.00	4.0	1.5
17a Child. Info., Instr.	103.50	4.3	5.25	0.2	108.75	2.4	0.8
Domestic Info.	60.75	2.5	95.75	4.5	156.50	3.5	5.4
16a Cooking	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.8

Appendix (Cont'd)

British Broadcasting Corporation Television, August 12-25, 1953
 Total Program Time, with January 4-10, 1953, New York City
 Program Percentages for Comparison*

Program Class	First Min.	Week Pct.	Second Min.	Week Pct.	Total Min.	Pct.	New York Pct.
16b Arts-Crafts-							
Hobby	19.50	0.8	52.75	2.5	72.25	1.6	0.5
16c Shopping-Mdse.	24.50	1.0	21.25	1.0	45.75	1.0	1.4
16d Personal Care	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.8
16h Other Domestic	16.75	0.7	21.75	1.0	38.50	0.9	-
<u>Total Information-</u> <u>type programs</u>	666.75	27.7	517.25	24.4	1184.00	26.2	16.8
<u>Orientation-type programs:</u>							
3 Public Issues	75.50	3.1	-	-	75.50	1.7	1.5
3a Individual Views	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.0
3b Discussion & Debate	75.50	3.1	-	-	75.50	1.7	0.5
4 Public Events	45.00	1.9	142.75	6.7	187.75	4.2	-
5 Institutional Progs.	25.25	1.1	-	-	25.25	0.6	1.2
5a Expository	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.7
5b Dramatization	25.25	1.1	-	-	25.25	0.6	0.5
7 Religion	-	-	13.50	0.6	13.50	0.3	1.7
16e Personal Relations	8.75	0.4	-	-	8.75	0.2	0.5
17b Pre-School Ent.	46.25	1.9	45.75	2.2	92.00	2.0	0.5
<u>Total Orientation-</u> <u>type programs</u>	200.75	8.4	202.00	9.5	402.75	8.9	5.5
<u>Total Program</u> <u>Time</u>	2403.50	100.0	2118.25	100.0	4521.75	100.0	100.0

* From Dallas W. Smythe, Three Years of New York Television, 1951-1953, January 4-10, pp. 15-16.

** New sub-category, not used by Smythe, added for purposes of this study.

Scanned from the National Association of Educational Broadcasters Records
at the Wisconsin Historical Society as part of
"Unlocking the Airwaves: Revitalizing an Early Public and Educational Radio Collection."



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